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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION REPORT - President Bush - Energy
Policy Islam - Controversy Over Caricatures
PARIS - Thursday, February 09, 2006

(A) SUBJECTS COVERED IN TODAY'S REPORT:

President Bush - Energy Policy
Islam - Controversy Over Caricatures

B) SUMMARY OF COVERAGE:

Front pages are overwhelmingly devoted to the inquiry of the judge whose inexperience led to innocent parents being jailed in connection with a child pornography trial. The inquiry is part of a broader investigation into alleged shortcomings in France's judicial system. The caricature controversy continues, with several editorials and op-eds still debating about the pros and cons of the West's stance on freedom of the press and the Arab-Muslim world's "manipulation" of the issue to its own ends. Le Figaro devotes a full page to the ongoing uproar over the publication of the drawings with an article entitled "Chirac Denounces the Provocations." A separate report: "The U.S. Accuses Damascus and Teheran of Inciting Violence" states Secretary Rice has accused these two countries of manipulating the crowds of rioters and using them for their own designs. The article also says that President Bush, who was meeting with King Abdallah of Jordan yesterday, condemned the violence but also called for the media to be more responsible. Radio commentator Bernard Guetta analyzes President Bush's attitude towards Denmark, "despite Denmark's engagement in Iraq." Serge July in his editorial in Liberation comments: "Freedom of expression is not an acquired right." (See Part C)

President Bush's new energy policy elicits two contradictory op-eds. For Alexandre Adler in Le Figaro, France's Areva company "may well come out a winner" of this new American energy policy. But for Jacques Amalric in Liberation, the President's new policy is nothing more than a "conjuring act." (See Part C)

Interior Minister Nicolas Sarkozy in an op-ed in Le Figaro, defends his immigration bill, contending that "choosing its immigrants" does not mean "a brain drain for France." "France cannot remain outside the worldwide flux of intelligence and competences. Neither France nor its European partners can be satisfied with a situation where the developed nations' elite massively moves to the U.S. and Canada while the European continent welcomes under-qualified immigrants. My plan is to favor mobility, not brain drain, and the temporary immigration of qualified personnel, who will later return to their home countries with a positive experience. To achieve this plan France must work together with the EU."

The WTO ruling on GMOs is reported in Le Figaro, which points out that while the U.S. and Canadian governments have declared themselves to be satisfied by the verdict, the European Commission "has minimized the consequences of the decision" since tractability and labeling of GMOs effectively ended the moratorium. La Croix reports "a first victory" for the United States and Canada. But adds: "The European Union could, however, well ignore the decision and decide to pay the penalties in lieu of changing the moratorium." La Croix also points out that the WTO decision is likely to be appealed.

Liberation carries a small item relating that "the tourism industry has sent a letter to PM Villepin complaining about the delay in providing the proper passports needed to travel to the U.S., 'a catastrophic and unique situation in all of Europe,' which will lead to a loss of business estimated to about 500 million euros."

(C) SUPPORTING TEXT/BLOCK QUOTES:

President Bush - Energy Policy

"America Prepares the Post-Oil Era"
Alexandre Adler in right-of-center Le Figaro (02/09):

"President Bush's State of the Union address could be a major turning point in the oil strategy game. His speech is nothing less than an open declaration of war against OPEC. The geo-strategic consequences are immense: oil monarchies will lose much of their income. The U.S. car industry will be a big loser, so will the Anglo-American oil lobby in Washington. But there will be three other winners in this redistribution of the cards: Russia is the most obvious, China the second, and finally, the third winner is simply France, thanks to its electro-nuclear program. And Areva is the best positioned company, as well as the most effective, as proven by the numerous contracts it has been landing in the U.S."

"Independence Yes, Energy Savings, No"

Jacques Amalric in left-of-center Liberation (02/09): "At first glance the President's stance on energy was saluted. But upon looking more closely, it is clear that his policy is nothing more than a conjuring act. in which the method of how to reach the goal was ignored. American (And European) oil companies can continue to bank on healthy results for the next twenty to thirty years."

Islam - Controversy Over Caricatures

"America and the Caricatures"

Bernard Guetta in government-run France Inter radio (02/09): "Denmark is a very close U.S. ally. And freedom of the press is a basic and sacred right in the U.S. Hence the White House should have gone to bat to defend Denmark. But this is hardly the case. Since the beginning, Washington has been overly cautious. denouncing the violence but respecting the indignation felt in the Arab-Muslim world, almost as if the White House wanted to remain neutral. Domestic policy weighs heavily on this line of conduct: President Bush owes his victory to the Christian right. But foreign policy is also guiding the President in his stance. In Iraq, he cannot take the risk of uniting Shiites and Sunnis against the U.S. through the appearance that the U.S. is condoning the caricatures. The U.S. has precious allies in the Arab Muslim world. and it does not want to destabilize them further by giving the impression it is on the side of the evil doers. Last but not least, the U.S. wants to keep the moderate Muslims on its side. The U.S. is beginning to see the difference between Islamists and Jihaddists, between terrorism and radicalism, and it is clear that President Bush's caution stems from a desire to safeguard the future."

"Caricatures"

Serge July in left-of-center Liberation (02/09): "Freedom of expression is not an acquired right: we must remain vigilant in order to protect it. But freedom of expression is not limitless, as some would have it: it cannot include insults based on religion or ethnic affiliations. According to the Constitution, one can make fun of the Muslim religion, but not of the Muslims themselves, because of their beliefs. The distinction is not easily understood in certain Muslim countries. The decision of the weekly satirical paper, Charlie Hebdo, to carry the drawings of an 'international drawing contest on the Holocaust' launched by an Iranian daily sends a clear message to the Islamists: you are doing what you have condemned Europe for."

"Fanatics Without Borders"

Alain Finkelkraut in left-of-center Liberation (02/09): "Islamic radicals are daunting enemies: in their eyes, there are no innocents. Was Bin Laden only the starter course? Iran's nuclear bellicose stance, added to the success of the Muslim Brotherhood in Palestine yesterday, and in Egypt tomorrow, and to the demonstrations we are witnessing in the Arab-Muslim world, warrant such a question." STAPLETON